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S-2896  
 memo for Caven  
 Logistics Sit. in  
 Northern Laos

Logistics Situation

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[redacted] during the first 11 months of 1968 an estimated 98,000 tons\* of supplies moved into Laos from North Vietnam, most of it by truck. After deducting estimated requirements of Communist forces in Laos (40,200 tons), about 57,800 tons were available for stockpiling in Laos and for stockpiling or use in South Vietnam. Of the total flow, about 42,000 tons moved into northern Laos -- an average of about 130 tons per day. This is well in excess of estimated requirements (55 tons per day) and suggests that sizeable stocks have been and are being continually built up in the north. Some economic goods (rice, salt, wire) have been involved in the traffic and some troops have been brought in by truck. Internal movement of supplies pivots on two major areas -- Samneua and Ban Ban. In the same period about 56,000 tons were moved into southern Laos over truck and trail from North Vietnam -- an average of about 165 tons per day. After deducting requirements (65 tons daily) two-thirds of the remaining 100 tons daily are available for stockpiling in southern Laos and South Vietnam and one-third for forwarding to meet the external requirements from North Vietnam of Communist forces in South Vietnam. As in northern Laos the flow in excess of requirements suggests the maintenance of more than adequate stocks.

2. Such reserves obviate the need for any sudden and concerted buildup by the enemy. Since late October 1968, however, there has been some improvement in Communist air defense capabilities in the

\* All figures are in short tons before deductions for losses.

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[REDACTED]

Laotian Panhandle. Several 85-mm AAA guns -- the largest current observed in Laos -- as well as two possible fire control radar have been noted. [REDACTED]

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4. In November attack sorties increased 104 percent and 49 percent in southern Laos (Steel Tiger) and northern Laos (Barrel Roll), respectively, over the level flown in October 1968 (pre-bomb halt). Relative priority may be seen in the fact that only 10 percent of the sorties were flown in northern Laos. This step-up resulted from US attempts to preempt the enemy's historical dry season logistic offensive and was facilitated by resources diverted from bombing operations in RVN. Although there have been no B-52

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[REDACTED]

strikes against northern Laos, there has been a 143 percent increase in such strikes in southern Laos in November over the level attained in October and more than 16,000 tons of bombs were dropped. Widespread damage to Routes 65/6 and 7 in northern Laos and the key entrance routes to the Panhandle -- Routes 12 (Mu Gia Pass) and 912 -- resulted from the intensified bombing, but the logistics flow into and through Laos has been sustained through rapid repair of existing roads and construction of new bypasses.

Value of Sources as Indicators

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5. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] provide in varying degrees indications of the level and direction of truck traffic, condition of roads, and the composition of the logistics flow from North Vietnam into Laos. As noted above, however, the extent of supply stocks currently available in Laos would permit the enemy to launch a major offensive without any increase in the supply input.

Gaps and Problems

6. Requirements. There is little information on Communist supply requirements in northern Laos. For example, we do not know the extent to which their forces in northern Laos depend on North Vietnam for food supplies. Our estimate of their other needs -- munitions, clothing and equipment, and POL -- is an extrapolation

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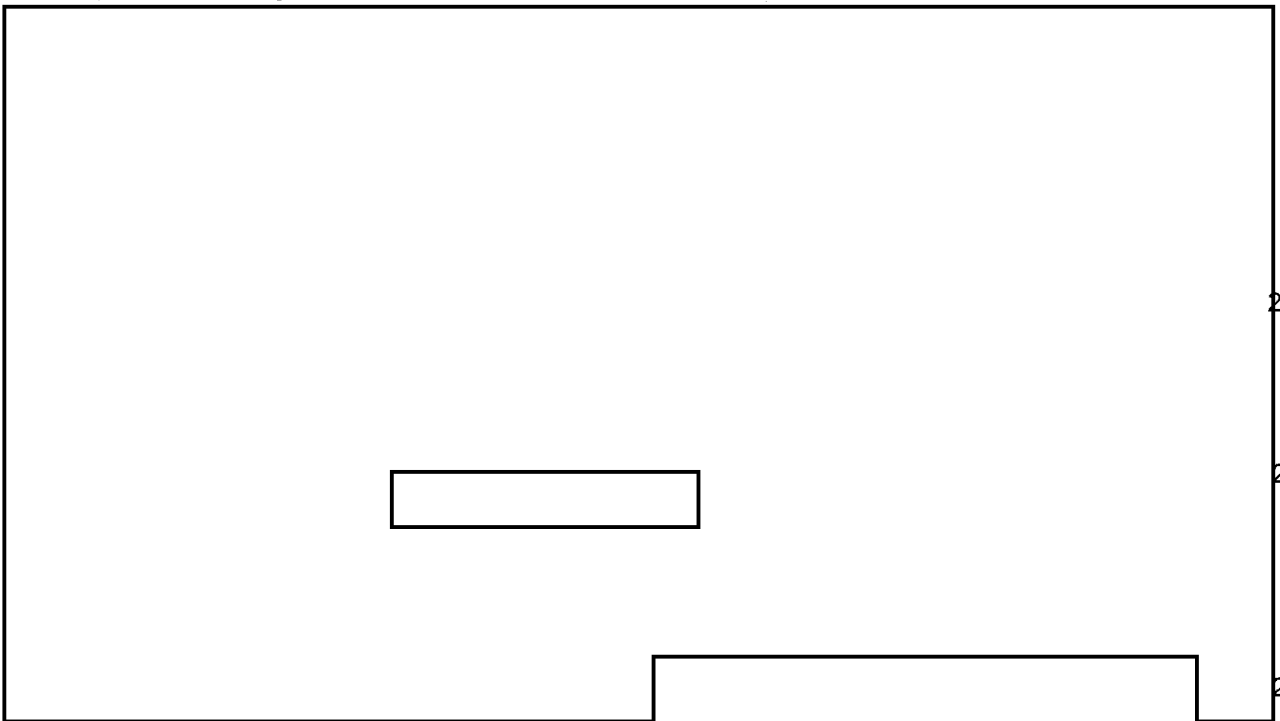
based on estimated supply requirements of troops in the Panhandle.

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7. Order of Battle. [redacted] provides only a provincial breakdown of enemy tactical strength, not total strength. For example, in October enemy tactical strength is given as 55,750 while total enemy strength is carried at 98,425. We need an OB reflecting total enemy strength by province in order to assess enemy logistical requirements.

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